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bring forward a definite saying of Jesus. They employed such testimony as they had at hand—the resurrection of their Lord, his power over demons, miracles, charismatic gifts, the divine witness of the prophets, and the higher moral life of believers who were willing even to suffer death for their faith. Paul discovered in his contact with the pagans that for them even the appeal to the Old Testament was of no avail. He therefore met them on common philosophical ground by pointing out the witness to God in nature and the testimony engraved on the tablets of their own hearts. Thus, as Paul says, the pagans “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come” (I Thess. 1:9, 10).

The superiority of Christianity over contemporary religions lay in its emphasis on the oneness of God and our common human brotherhood, as exemplified in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus had somehow rediscovered for the world, in a fresher and more vital way than anyone had before, the ease of

accessibility to God the Father. God was not only the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe but the loving Father who takes a personal interest in the welfare of each of his children. While the message of Paul and the other apostles naturally differed in important particulars from that of Jesus, the gospel of winning love remained the same. If God is the loving Father of all, then all men are brothers. The little fraternity grew into a great popular movement. Social distinctions vanished, and the faithful of distant places provided for needy brothers in Christ whom they had never seen. We can scarcely realize what emotions stirred those who for the first time heard the words, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” The Roman religion relied upon cold and meaningless formulas, Stoicism upon mere self-elevation of soul, and the mystery-religions upon unintelligible revelations. The emissaries of Christ went forth, not to preach a law, but forgiveness of sin; not a life regulated by principle, but a life dominated by love; not a religion of esoteric wisdom, but faith in a living Person and a Spirit.

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## ELEMENTARY BIBLE-TEACHING WHICH COVERS THE GROUND

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Is there any definite ground to be covered in elementary Bible-teaching? If so, can the material be so defined and organized that the ground may be cov-

ered within the time available in eight years, from ages six to fourteen?

The importance of these questions is measured by the place which Bible-

teaching ought to take in the foundations of character. The largeness of this place may be assumed here without argument, while we proceed with an attempt at an answer to the first questions.

The position generally taken in answer to these questions is that the ground is not covered, indeed, but that the time available in Sunday school is so short—a half-hour once a week—that it is impossible to cover the ground in any adequate way. The responsibility is therefore thrown over on established conditions of society, and there the matter ends.

The position taken in this paper is that until better use is made of the time now given to this work it is unwise to set apart more time for the same use. And further, it is quite possible to cover the ground of elementary Bible-teaching fairly well in four hundred weekly periods of thirty minutes each, at least with a few extra periods which a reasonable interest in the subject would naturally justify.

It is not maintained here that elementary Bible-teaching is all that is necessary for an adequate religious education. Quite a variety of other lines of instruction should accompany the Bible work. As the desirability of these other lines of religious instruction becomes evident, provision will no doubt be made for them, either by making two periods of teaching in the Sunday school or by organizing other classes and agencies which will do the work. The Sunday school has definitely undertaken to handle the Bible work; it is expected to do it, and with certain simple readjustments it can do it. Let us see what those readjustments are.

The first of these necessary readjustments will be to delimit the ground. All

forms of intensive Bible-study must be excluded as unsuitable for elementary pupils. All literary and historical criticism must be excluded for the same reason. Practically all hortatory and theological material in the Prophets and epistles must be excluded, and all the poetry and wisdom except a few brief and well-selected portions to be memorized or used in other special ways, such as social worship.

From what remains those portions will be selected which are concrete and narrative in style or for some other reason appeal to the minds of children. They must be significant and capable of being understood by children and sufficiently near to their experience to be teachable.

This of course reduces the field materially. The Bible is an adult book and not a juvenile book. There are many things in it which appeal to children, but those things need to be selected with skill, for it is a waste of time to try to teach them other parts of the Bible. It is one of the chief criticisms of past and present systems that this selection has been poorly made or not made at all. The difference of functioning power between the child mind and the adult mind has been but little understood and often wholly overlooked. The expenditure of time, labor, money, and opportunity made in teaching adult material to children bears little fruit and leaves a prejudice against the good things which might be done.

A second readjustment consists in taking the Bible material thus delimited and skilfully grading and editing it so as to make it still better suited to the particular ages of children for whom it is

intended. The baby stories are interesting to much younger children than the tales of true heroism, and the uses to be made of the two kinds of stories are quite different.

When the question has been settled as to what grade a particular incident best befits, it must then be so edited as to make it most effective for that use. Some words may need to be omitted or replaced by easier ones. Some portions of the story are not relevant for present use and had better be omitted. The story is too long or too short. It needs an introductory or a supplementary part in order to make it most effective. It needs a certain picture to reinforce it, or a text or maxim to crystallize its main part. A proper editing will provide for all these cases, and so help all teachers who use the lesson to get the best results with whatever skill or resources they may have. Editing has often been supposed to mean the massing of "helps" or material more or less relevant, such as a teacher or expositor might possibly be interested in. But real editing reduces itself to a minimum, and has in view always the child of definite grade, rather than the teacher regardless of grade.

This involves, in the third place, a readjustment of the thing aimed at by the teacher of elementary classes. Instead of the pretentious and futile attempt to teach Bible meanings to the children, let the teacher be satisfied with the more modest and more workable aim of teaching the story contents of the Bible, or such portions of it as have been selected for the grade in hand, the story meanings of which are obvious. Little more is needed by the average wide-

awake child than to hear and tell the story.

This concrete material becomes seed to the fertile soil, and in the course of a few years it germinates, and finally it becomes fruitful with meaning rightly borne. And the best meanings can never arise in the artificial way of pinning them upon the Bible stories at the time when they are first taught to children. The best that a teacher can do is to simply exhibit the generalized meaning or inference in a brief and simple statement. This may help the child's mind to germinate that particular idea in his own later thinking.

Children can receive and retain a surprising amount of suitable material, but they can retain or use almost nothing in the way of inference, generalization, and interpretation. It is a good economy therefore to give them each year all the material they can receive of the kind which is best suited to their mental powers, leaving the other kinds of material until such time as changed mental conditions will enable them to receive it to better advantage.

A fourth readjustment must come in the way of organizing the material. One of the popular criticisms against the International Uniform Lessons has been expressed in the phrases, "hop-skip-and-jump," "hit-or-miss." These criticisms imply a lack of chronological sequence, and even if they were true they are not pertinent to lower grades, for young children do not care for chronological sequence.

But the criticisms grow out of a deep-seated craving for some kind of organization of the material. It must not be assumed that time and place are the only

principles of organization. Any fact which enters into the conscious experience of children may serve to organize their lessons on that subject into series, so that they will not seem to be "hit or miss." A little series of three or four sheep stories, or baby stories, gives organization suitable for the first-grade mind. If there are ten or fifteen stories the effect is lost from lack of power to unify them. But three or four years later that power is developed so that a dozen tales of true heroism give the cumulative effect of unity in theme.

Series follows series, increasing in number of lessons and advancing in the maturity of the unifying theme, until in grades six to eight a thoroughgoing chronological organization is possible for all material thus far covered. The time order can then be given once for all, so that every piece of later work can be fitted into its proper place without again establishing the landmarks.

A fair organization of Bible material will give pupils of all ages a sense of connectedness in their work; it affords a cumulative effect and enables them to remember it more easily; it covers each part of the ground at the most advantageous period of life, and neither duplicates work nor leaves areas untouched which ought to be covered. Some day people will wonder because this organization has been so long in its accomplishment.

If the Bible material for the grades were organized in any broad and thorough way it would then be possible to

carry out a final readjustment of the teaching, which would be a cumulative review.

A large percentage of results of the best teaching must soon vanish if there is no system of conserving those results. Any system which conserves these results must have made all the readjustments mentioned above. The material must be remembered from year to year, and therefore it must be well defined and conveniently at the hand of every teacher. If it is concrete, and well graded, and well organized, it will then be possible for teachers to maintain a cumulative review. The results of the teaching will then be retained long enough to enter into the pupils' ideals, and to become pragmatic factors of character.

The claim is that the required ground can be fairly well covered in elementary Bible-teaching if the readjustments above mentioned are made with scientific skill. The confidence with which this claim is made is based upon some years of experience in preparing the lesson material for eight grades and in supervising the teaching of it under a great variety of conditions, by teachers both trained and untrained.

It is entirely practicable for children at the end of the eighth grade in Sunday school to know and be able to tell three hundred Bible stories. If they are able to do that they will not be wholly lacking in an educational basis for the spiritual life.